

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Georgia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Durable medical equipment company owner charged in kickback scheme

Defendant is 25th charged in telemedicine conspiracy

SAVANNAH, GA: A Florida man who operated a durable medical equipment company has been charged for his alleged participation in a Medicare kickback and telemedicine fraud scheme.

Patrick Wolfe, 48, of Belleair Beach, Fla., the operator of Wilmington Island Medical Inc., which does business as WI Medical Inc., a Georgia company, is accused of conspiring to pay kickbacks for “leads,” which were in actuality signed orders from physicians and nurse practitioners, and then billing those orders to Medicare Part B and Medicare Part C using WI Medical, said Bobby L. Christine, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Georgia. The financial total for orders facilitated through this scheme is alleged to be in the millions of dollars. Medicare beneficiaries were located in the Southern District of Georgia and elsewhere. The defendant was charged by way of an Information, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Georgia.

“White collar crime – and particularly health care fraud – continues to be a priority for this office and we are proud to work with our dedicated law enforcement partners to aggressively pursue those who illegally exploit government safety-net programs for personal gain,” said U.S. Attorney Christine.

This prosecution, arising out of the related “Operation Brace Yourself” and “Operation Double Helix,” together with those previously announced, continue to add to the largest fraud operation prosecuted in the history of the Southern District of Georgia. Previous charges in this string of cases include eight physicians, two nurse practitioners, three operators of different telemedicine companies, two brokers of patient data, and several owners of durable medical equipment companies. The Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries whose identities were used as part of the scheme are located throughout the country, including throughout the Southern District of Georgia.


The combined total of more than \$475 million in fraud charged in the Southern District of Georgia is part of nationwide operations by the Department of Justice that thus far has included allegations involving billions of dollars in fraudulent claims for genetic testing, orthotic braces, pain creams, and other items.

“This is another in a long line of charges in a continuous investigation into fraud that hurts every taxpayer and steals money earmarked for those who need it to meet their healthcare issues,” said Chris Hacker, Special Agent in Charge of FBI Atlanta. “The FBI and our fellow federal partners will not rest until everyone involved in wrongdoing is brought to justice.”

“Now more than ever, it’s paramount that we safeguard the Medicare trust fund,” said Derrick L. Jackson, Special Agent in Charge at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General in Atlanta. “We continue to work with our law enforcement partners to identify and hold responsible providers who perpetrate telemedicine fraud schemes.”

“This type of corruption involving health care fraud against Medicare and Medicaid has managed to defraud American taxpayers of millions upon millions of dollars,” said Resident Agent in Charge Glen M. Kessler of the U.S. Secret Service. “The U.S. Secret Service and our partners are always willing to take prompt and coordinated actions to hold these telemarketers and medical professionals responsible for placing personal greed above the good of the public, particularly in light of our nation’s current struggles with the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Indictments or criminal informations contain only charges; defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

This investigation is ongoing. As telemedicine becomes an increasing part of our healthcare system, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, vigilance in ensuring that fraud and kickbacks do not usurp the legitimate practice of medicine by electronic means is more important than ever. If you are aware of any fraud or kickbacks relating to telemedicine, including COVID-19 fraud, please call the FBI hotline at 1-800-CALL-FBI .

This particular prosecution resulted from a joint investigation of multiple agencies and offices. U.S. Attorney Christine acclaimed the hard work of the investigatory team, led by FBI - Savannah, the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, and the United States Secret Service.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys J. Thomas Clarkson and Jonathan A. Porter are prosecuting these cases on behalf of the United States.

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